

[Dolph Parsons]

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Dolph Parsons, Textile worker,

Kannapolis, N.C.

Ethel Deal, writer

Dudley W. Crawford, Reviser.

Original Names Changed names

Kannapolis Cannonville

Eva Parson Ila Perkins

Charlotte Riverton

Salisbury Slater. C9 - 1/22/41 - N.C.

"I'm thirty years old. I was raised up in the mountains, and my people was just as poor as mountain people get. Mother was a widow and had such a hard time getting along with three children to support, I stayed with my grandparents.

"I got no education, just a few days now and then when granddaddy could spare me from digging on them rocky hills. He was old and needed help; I was young and resented it. I tried to reason with myself, but I wanted to get away.

"I finally made the break when I was sixteen years old. They were building a new road through the mountains. I took the bull by the horns and asked for a job. The boss man

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gave me one carrying water. This was hard work, but I had grit. Digging in them mountains hadn't been for nothing. As water boy they paid me a dollar a day. Granddaddy couldn't believe it! A dollar a day looked as big to him as a wagon wheel. It looked even bigger to me.

"This increased my bitterness for the mountains and made me more determined than ever to leave. I knew once I got away I could find something to do.

"I also knew my education would be a drawback; for that reason I hunted up my old school books and would lay by the hour at night flat of my belly by a big log fire and pore over the pages. Granddaddy would 2 scold and tell me I had enough book learning to farm. Granny would set by the fire knitting socks and smile to herself. I think she understood lots of things that was going on in my mind.

"When the road was finished, I had ninety six dollars in cash; besides what I'd given my grandparents. I bought me a couple of suit cases and packed my things. One night when the rest was asleep, I slipped away and left no word where I was going. I guess you think I was awful selfish; I was, but I couldn't stay there and I knew if they found out where I was they would make me go back. That's been over thirteen years ago.

I've been in Cannonsville ever since. I took a job scrubbing, the lowest job in the mill with the lowest pay. I made a dollar and sixty cents a day. I kept my eyes open. I had no idea of staying on that job long. I was promoted to sweeper in six months, then spare hand where I did anything they asked me to do, and got two dollars a day.

"Then came the chance I had been looking for. I wanted to weave. I had odd moments in which to learn and in six months more I had a set of looms; drawing over forty dollars every two weeks.

"I worked four years before I was married. I dressed well; boarded at a nice place and saved money.

I didn't waste any though. I had such a little in the mountains, I just glori gloried in having some now. I put my money in the building and loan. When Ila and I were married I had twenty four hundred dollars. In all that time I didn't go home or even write my people. I guess the Lord has His way of punishing sinners.

"I was twenty one and Ila sixteen when we were married. I don't suppose many people were as happy as I was. I'd learned to mix with the crowd and be social. I bought Ila two diamond rings by cutting out pleasure for myself. Nothing was too good for her; for myself I didn't mind.

"Our first baby was born in a hospital a year and a half after we were married. Ila was having convulsions as a result of high blood pressure. The doctor held little hope for her. He claimed the only way he could save her was by an operation, but finally decided against it. After three days of suffering a six pound girl was born and two years later another.

"About a year later Ila got it in her head she wanted to work. My savings had increased and I had four thousand dollars in the building and loan. I opposed her working, she didn't have to. I could make a living; but she insisted, and I finally consented. She put her money on a car, we had never owned one and it 4 was nice to be able to run around like the rest of our friends.

"We had trouble getting a housekeeper at first, but at lest we found a settled negro woman. She was a splendid cook, and took good care of the children. We gave her a room in our home.

"In the spring I began to feel bad and decided to go to a doctor. After he examined me he asked a lot of questions. When he was through he told me I had a bad case of syphilis. I couldn't believe it, but he said it was true. I was stunned. I wondered what Ila would say.

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I loved my wife and had been true to her, and had no idea where I got such a dreadful disease. I sat there, time for me had stopped. I knew the doctor thought I was guilty, but I didn't mind that. I was wondering how I was going to explain to my wife; she'd never believe me. Then another damning thought entered my mind, was my wife guilty and had I caught it from her. I had heard her complain.

"Finally the doctor suggested that I begin treatment at once; he also advised me to have my wife examined. I took a shot then and there. I went home, told my wife I had the sick headache and went to bed. When Ila went to bed she told me she ought to see a doctor, she thought she had female trouble. My worst fears was confirmed. The next morning I insisted on her going to the doctor.

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When I got off in the afternoon I went by the doctor's office, he told me my wife had been and she was worse than I was; that he had given her a shot.

"That was the beginning of the hell on earth for me. I thought of my old granddaddy plowing up there on the steep hills, and wished I'd died there. We got worse and worse Ila was just a shadow of her former self.

"My nerves got to the point I had to take a couple of shots of dope to relieve them. The relief was so great I bought me a needle and gave myself dope. This was done secretly. Ila decided to go to Riverton to the hospital— I did every thing I could to keep her from going, for I knew they would tell her the truth; but she went any way. When she came back she looked at me in scorn and asked me why I didn't tell her the truth. That hurt me. I tried in vain to explain.

"We had fired the cook because we had heard she had syphilis, and that is where the doctor said we caught it.

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"From then on we went to Riverton for treatment and it was very expensive. That was five years ago and we are still taking it.

"Ila left me a number of times, but she always come back. I was almost crazy. One night I decided I couldn't stand any more, so I took three shots of dope. I got as far as the bed and fell across [Ila?] I waked 6 up two days later in a hospital; a coward's way out but I wanted to die.

"Then came that awful day when my money gave out. I got off from my work, and the next thing I knew I was in Slater charged with burning up my car. I might have done it I don't know. I refused bond and stayed in jail three months. Ila went back home. When my trial come off I got a sentence of eighteen months at hard labor. My mother and granddaddy come to see me, but no one could help. The county gave me my treatments and Ila's daddy paid for hers. Maybe you think I didn't suffer. Well, you're mistaken. It was hell to do without the dope I'd learned to love. I had plenty of friends that would have come to my aid, but I know the only way to break myself from the habit was to stay where I couldn't get it.

"Ila came to see me often when I was on the road, but I'd heard she was going to get a divorce. She admitted to me she was seeing a good bit of another man while I was away.

"The day I left prison I promised God, with His help I'd serve him and do right, regardless of how black things looked for me. I was broke, didn't have a dollar; the furniture all gone. The first person I went to see was Ila's father, he was the whitest man I ever knew. Although he thought I was guilty he could be just. He advised me to go away that I had caused him enough trouble. I begged him to let me see Ila just once and 7 he said I could if I wouldn't persuade her in anyway I would be welcome to see here. I promised. That was three years ago and we are happier today than we were years ago.

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"I still say no woman should go in public work unless it absolutely necessary. She never know knows who she is leaving the children with, in our case it [robbe?] robbed us first of all several years of happiness, besides the home we had planned and saved for through years of our married life.